

socially superior to the men.¹ The eldest women of the clan exercise, he tells us, the most decisive Influence on the conduct of Its affairs, and the headman does nothing without full consultation with them, a consultation which In the great houses extends to affairs of state and foreign politics.² Nay, these elder women are even esteemed and treated as equal to the deities In their lifetime.³

The high But the high position which women thus take in Pelew

wonienⁿ ^{1" soc*et y *s not a rc^{sult}} of mother-kin only. It has an Indus- the Peicw trial as well as a kinship basis. For the Pelew Islanders ailoⁿ ^{haS SUDsist} mainly on the produce of their taro fields, and the industrial cultivation of this, their staple food, is the business of the ti^{aione} women alone. " This cardinal branch of Pelew agriculture, cultivate which is of paramount Importance for the subsistence of the staple people, is left entirely in the hands of the women. This food of fact mav |iave contributed materially to the predominance

the people. ^{^ . ^ > i}
of female influence m the social condition of the people. The women do not merely bestow life on the people, they also do that which is most essential for the preservation of life, and therefore they are called Adhaldl a pelti, the * Mothers of the Land/ and are politically and socially superior to men. Only their offspring enjoy the privilege of membership of the state (the children of the men are, strictly speaking, strangers destitute of rights), and the oldest women of the families are esteemed and treated as equal to deities even in their lifetime, and they exercise a decisive influence on the conduct of affairs of state. No chief would venture to come to a decision without first consulting

with the
Adhaldl a blay> the 'Mothers of the Family/
 From this
 point of view it is impossible to regard the
 assignment
 of the taro cultivation to women as a
 consequence of
 their subordinate position in society: the women
 themselves
 do not so regard it. The richest woman of the
 village looks
 with pride on her taro patch, and although she
 has female
 followers enough to allow her merely to
 superintend the
 work without taking part in it, she
 nevertheless prefers to
 lay aside her fine apron and to betake herself
 to the deep

¹ See the statement of Kubary *titngcn der*
Pdauer, p. 39.

quoted in the next paragraph. ³ See the statement of Kubary
 (quoted

² J. Kubary, *Die socialeu Einrich-* in the next paragraph.